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ABSTRACT

The American philosophy of social mobility has traditionally focused upon equal opportunity to succeed rather than the actual equality of socioeconomic status from the outset. Two replicate studies of social mobility in the U.S. undertaken in the early sixties and seventies enable social scientists to measure shifts in opportunities for American men. General findings about recent trends are presented in this document. Typically, American children have acquired more schooling than their parents, and access to a high school education has increased for the less advantaged. This greater equality of precollege education by social trends, however, tends to mask the persistence of unequal opportunity for a college education. In terms of job opportunities, occupational mobility of whites did not change between 1962 and 1973, but that of blacks did. In 1962, there was little relationship between the occupational position of the black man and that of his father. In 1973, there was evidence that the occupational positions tended to persist across generations for both blacks and whites (although there is also substantial occupational mobility). In terms of income opportunities, the relative economic returns of college education have declined for young whites but not for young blacks. This latter phenomenon has contributed to a relative "catching up" of the black minority. (Author/GC)

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HAS OPPORTUNITY DECLINED IN AMERICA?

David L. Featherman

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HAS OPPORTUNITY DECLINED IN AMERICA?

David L. Featherman

ABSTRACT

Two replicate studies of social mobility in the U.S. undertaken in the early sixties and seventies enable social scientists to measure shifts in opportunities for American men. Insofar as public interest in the degree of socioeconomic success which Americans can achieve without limitation by the circumstances of family and social background persists, these studies provide some answers to the question, "How much opportunity is there?"

General findings about recent trends include the following: (1) Typically, American children have acquired more schooling than their parents and access to a high school education has increased for the less advantaged. (2) This greater equality of precollege education by social trends, however, tends to mask the persistence of unequal opportunity for a college education. (3) Occupational mobility of whites did not change between 1962 and 1973, but that of blacks did. In 1962 there was little relationship between the occupational position of the black man and that of his father. In 1973 there was evidence that the occupational positions tended to persist across generations for both blacks and whites (although there is also substantial occupational mobility). (4) The relative economic returns of college education have declined for young whites but not for young blacks--contributing to a relative "catching-up" of the black minority.

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Has Opportunity Declined in America?

Social mobility is an important aspect of American history. It is reflected in early colonization and conquest of the native population and in the subsequent revolution for political independence. It appears as the ethnic mosaic of our immigrant forefathers. After the Great Depression, the steady migration of young persons from farms and small towns to the swelling cities entailed social as well as geographic mobility. Given the central place of social mobility in our historical past, it is easy to understand the vitality of our shared image of America as a land of opportunity. Perhaps because mobility is part of our national image, Americans continue to monitor the degree of opportunity in contemporary society.

Interestingly, we seem more concerned that American society continue to be structured so as to permit social mobility across generations than that it contain less inequality in current social and economic standing. Americans assent to the awarding of widely different prizes to persons depending on their performance in the economic "race." But we insist that all run the race under the same set of rules so that ability and talent show themselves in a fair way; and we sometimes intervene on behalf of some who cannot start the race from the same place as most of us. Our social programs to insure equality of economic opportunity--to overcome the "handicaps" of social background--issue from this logic.

Without regard to the wisdom of our comparative philosophical intolerance of inequality of opportunity as contrasted with our tolerance of inequality of socioeconomic well-being, we can address the question of whether contemporary

American society continues to be permeable. For example, does it allow the offspring of lower status families to acquire the material well-being and occupational statuses of middle-class life to as great a degree as in the past? Some social commentators suggest that opportunities for socioeconomic advancement were quite extensive immediately following World War II, largely as a consequence of the war-heated economy and of the GI Bill for education. One such evaluation puts it pointedly:

> There can be few Americans without firsthand knowledge of the GI Bill's workings. And there can be no doubt that it has been a tremendous instrument for social change in a society which professes equality but maintains an increasingly rigid class structure from which it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to escape. Except for the Homestead Act of the last century, it is doubtful whether any single legislative enterprise has done so much as the GI Bill to open up opportunity for talented people. (Patrick Owens, Newsday, June 11, 1975)

Yet at least on their face, recent social conditions lead other Americans to suspect that mobility is less possible than in the 1950s and 1960s--that the society is less permeable, more rigid--and that downward mobility has become more prevalent for young persons in comparison with their parents. For example, a smaller proportion of high school graduates enrolled in colleges and universities in the early 1970s than had done so throughout the '60s. At the same time, unemployment of college graduates was rising and the relative earnings of college graduates fell in relation to workers with only a high school education. Some college graduates apparently were taking jobs such as taxi drivers which indicated an increase in the "underemployment" of highly educated workers. Inasmuch as formal schooling has been a major basis for social mobility, recent popular and scientific commentary has questioned the present and future possibilities for social mobility. The President's Panel on Youth voiced this concern a few years ago:

> If the R & D boom does not get going again and the educational system does not move to some new highly intensive way of dealing with disadvantaged children, the outlook is rather bleak. It is quite probable that the rates of return to education will fall, perhaps even sharply, and they may have already started falling. This will lead to a new problem, a problem with which the United States has had little experience, the existence of a relatively large group of highly educated but underemployed and disappointed young people. (Transition to Adulthood, 1974)

Fortunately, sociological studies of the American male labor force--completed in the early 1960s and the mid-1970s--help shed light on this question of trend in social mobility.

Education's Rising Floor

Typically, American children have acquired more schooling than their parents. That pattern continues even though contemporary parents and offsprings are more highly educated than were families in the early part of this century. Males born between 1907 and 1911 finished on average just under 10 years of school, while those born after World War II have completed nearly 13 years, on average. While level of schooling was rising across this century, variability of educational levels within successively younger generations became less pronounced, signalling a decline in educational inequality. Fewer than half the males born before World War I completed 12 or more years of school, but over 85 percent of those born after World War II graduated from high school. Since the proportion of successive generations of males graduating from college has not risen correspondingly,[1] declining educational inequality resulted from the rising "floor" of minimum education. This trend was helped by child labor legislation, upward shifts in the age of compulsory school attendance, and the greater affluence of parents.

But higher average levels of schooling and greater educational equality have not eliminated the possibilities for educational mobility between generations (see Table 1). Typically, sons have completed about three more years of schooling than their fathers. These educational changes in a generation may have peaked for white men born in the early 1920s, but the educational "gap" between black sons and their fathers continues to widen. The fact that educational differences between fathers and sons are perhaps smaller than in the recent past does not imply that educational attainment is becoming more dependent upon social background. If anything, just the opposite is the case. A combination of factors such as parent's education, head of household's occupation, race, size of family, and whether or not the family was intact or "broken"--measures of social and family background--account for about one-third of the variability of educational levels completed by sons born prior to WW I. The same measures of background account for less variability--about one-quarter of it--in the attainments of those born during and after WW II. Thus, the prospects for educational mobility have <u>increased</u>, at least for individuals who complete high school. Access to a high school education has opened not only to greater fractions of each new birth but also to the less advantaged.

But if high school graduates have become relatively more common in all households, such is not the case with college students. Inasmuch as a minority of any birth cohort attends college, greater equality of precollege education by social background tends, in the aggregate, to mask the persistence of unequal opportunity for a college education. Historic differentials in educational achievement by persons of various socioeconomic backgrounds are tending to disappear among those who complete no more than high school. But there is no apparent decline in the unequal chances to attend and complete college as a

function of family and social background. Yet if matriculation in college today is no less contingent upon a person's social and financial background than a decade or so ago, this continuing degree of unequal opportunity should be seen in perspective. One-fourth, at most, of the educational (level or grade completed) differences among collegians reflects differentials in their social backgrounds, as indicated by the measures mentioned above. Hence, educational achievement at all levels--high school and college--is not narrowly restricted by the socioeconomic level of one's family per se.[2]

Job Mobility

Job-holding is the principal activity by which Americans gain their livelihood. In treating occupational mobility as an indicator of social mobility, sociologists are interested mainly in life-long processes which relate one's occupational position to the circumstances of one's upbringing, schooling, and career beginnings. From two large surveys, carried out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1962 and again in 1973, it is possible to measure the occupational mobility of American men from generation to generation. Unfortunately, there are no large and detailed surveys of the social mobility of women, but the available data suggest that most of the findings about men also apply to women who work outside the home.

Table 2 shows the mobility of adult U.S. men from the occupations of their fathers (or other family heads) when they were about 16 years old to the occupations they held in March 1962 or March 1973. The five broad categories of occupation are ranked in the table from high to low according to the average incomes and educational levels of their incumbents. Two findings are obvious. First, occupational positions tend to persist across generations in the United States, but there is also a great deal of occupational mobility. There has been a general movement out of farming, and elsewhere there is considerable

movement up and down the social scale. About two-thirds of the sons of professionals, businessmen, and other white-collar workers enter careers in some type of white-collar jobs. But 30 to 40 percent of the sons of manual workers, upwardly mobile from their fathers' blue-collar jobs such as craftsmen or factory workers, also gain white-collar employment. At the same time 30 percent or more of the sons of white-collar workers end up in manual or farm occupations. As one can see by comparing the occupational distributions of sons and their fathers in either 1962 or 1973, there is more upward than downward mobility across generations. In 1973, 49 percent were upwardly mobile and 19 percent were downwardly mobile, and in 1962 the corresponding figures were 49 percent upwardly mobile and 17 percent downwardly mobile.

The second main finding in Table 2 is that the results of the 1962 and 1973 surveys are so much alike. There are essentially no differences between the mobility patterns of U.S. men in 1962 and in 1973. In a sense this is to be expected, for occupational mobility is portrayed here as a life-long process and most of the men in the labor force in 1962 were still working in 1973.

In contrast to the total population, there have been marked changes in mobility patterns within the black population. Table 3 shows the inter-generational mobility of adult black men in 1962 and in 1973. In 1962 there was little relationship between the occupational position of a black man and that of his father (or other family head). As among whites, there was a massive shift away from farm occupations. In other cases black men born at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy stayed at the bottom, and even those few born into white-collar families were mainly destined to enter lower manual

occupations. While men in the majority population enjoyed a form of socially inherited advantage--namely, the modest persistence of occupational standing across generations--the black minority did not. Black sons typically could not enter the general, similar lines of work pursued by their parents, unless of course the family head held a lower manual job or was a farmer. A comparison of the tables for black men and for all men (mainly whites) in 1962 suggests that black men used to be subjected to a perverse form of equality of opportunity in the world of work--a perversity which denied the advantages of "lucky" birth into a white-collar family and which constrained nearly 80 percent of black sons from higher status origins to be downwardly mobile. At the base of this perverse form of opportunity was the limitation of the types of occupations which were open to blacks. For example, fewer than 7 percent of black sons in the 1962 labor force (Table 3) grew up in white-collar families; only about 12 percent of all black male workers in that year held white-collar jobs. These figures contrast with those of 24 percent and 40 percent, respectively, among total men (mainly whites, in Table 2).

But by 1973 the mobility table for black men was more like that of all men than it had been a decade earlier. Mobility to white-collar occupations was more prevalent among the sons of farmers and manual workers, and the sons of white-collar workers showed a tendency to enter white-collar work which was intermediate between that of black men in 1962 and that of all men in 1962 or 1973. These changes in occupational mobility occurred mainly, but not entirely, among the young black men who entered the labor force between 1962 and 1973. In large part, these changes reflect the wider range of occupations in which black males gain employment. For instance, the 22 percent employed in white-collar jobs in 1973 was an improvement over the 12 percent in 1962.

While for the majority of men the pattern of social mobility has not shifted a great deal in the last decade or so--at least in terms of incumbency in quite broad occupational categories such as in Tables 2 and 3--there have been important shifts in the dependence of occupational achievements on one's social background and level of schooling. These shifts appear when sociologists examine the specific occupations men hold (rather than the broad occupational groups such as "professional" or "white-collar"). Using each of the several hundred detailed occupational titles identified by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "status" scores for occupations can be calculated which reflect the average of the schooling and income of men in that occupation (scores range arbitrarily from 0 to 96). Figure 1 expresses the variability of the current occupations of men, in terms of these detailed status scores; it shows the percentage of this variation which can be assigned to various "causes" of occupational achievement in the years of the two national studies of mobility, 1962 and 1973.

Figure 1 suggests that three important changes are underway. First, the persistence of socioeconomic inequality between generations--as indicated by the percentage of occupational "status" variation which reflects the measures of social and economic background--is small and declining. The "pure" or "net" effects of background on sons' achievement declined from 11 to about 7 percent between 1962 and 1973. Second, the impact of education on differential occupational achievements remained about the same, but the mobility-facilitating role of schooling strengthened while its role as a vehicle of status persistence weakened. The latter role arises because socioeconomic background does lend differential advantage for educational achievement, with persons from higher status families completing more. Insofar as education is an important precondition of occupational success and socioeconomic level, then the schools help perpetuate socioeconomic inequality from generation to generation. The

significance of that role of education is indexed by what is called the "overlapping influence of social background and education" in Figure 1, which implies that such a mechanism of status persistence through the schools accounted for about 14 percent of occupational achievement in both 1962 and 1973. But as was implied by the commentary on educational achievement, a large and increasing fraction of educational differences among persons do not stem from their socioeconomic backgrounds. This major portion of educational variability also influences occupational achievements and might be regarded as the mobility-inducing role of schooling, since it does not reflect a person's background. In Figure 1, it is called the "net effect of education." Clearly, the mobility-inducing effect of schooling is larger than its other role in transmitting inequalities between generations. To the extent that shifts are apparent in Figure 1, the mobility-inducing role is increasing relative to the other, and there is little evidence for a dwindling capacity of education to provide resources for social mobility.

The third shift in Figure 1--in the "causes" of occupational achievement--involves the increased importance of factors other than social background and schooling. Since these factors are not formally represented, it would be improper to infer their identity. Suffice it to say that the collection of such "residual causes" is largely unassociated with the specific features of family background and education listed with Figure 1.[3] Given the slight increase in the importance of the set of unspecified, "residual" factors in accounting for differences in men's occupational statuses, we might conclude that socioeconomic achievement surely is no more rigidly determined by the home and the school than in the recent past. American society may even be more permeable to occupational achievements acquired independently of the resources individuals accumulate from their families and schools.

Intergenerational Status Persistence among Blacks

These conclusions do not adequately portray at least one of several signs of recent change in the occupational mobility of the black minority. Unlike the shift toward slightly less intergenerational status persistence within the majority population, blacks in the labor force--particularly young men in their late 20s--have recently experienced greater persistence than blacks of comparable ages in the early 1960s. Were such a shift occurring among whites, sociologists might sound the alarm over impending declines in opportunity. In this case, however, the change signifies an emerging capacity of black families with relative advantage to assist their offspring's socioeconomic careers. This change is easily seen in Table 3 within the broad classification of occupations. For example, black families in which the head was employed in a professional or managerial (upper white-collar) occupation had sons who rarely (10 percent) entered similar lines of upper white-collar work in 1962; most sons from those families were constrained to undertake lower manual jobs in factories and in service work (60 percent). During the same period, white sons from upper white-collar families typically had careers in similar white-collar fields (54 percent) and few worked in factories or in service jobs (15 percent). The inherent capacity of families in most western societies to pass along their accumulated resources to their offspring as a competitive advantage in the socioeconomic "race" apparently is being extended to the black family. This emergence of the "privilege" of socioeconomic class within the black minority--privilege enjoyed by the white American population for decades--comes at a time when changes in the occupational mobility of whites may be leading toward a gradual erosion of such privilege. Together, these shifts point toward a slow convergence of the still distinct, unequal patterns of social mobility of the two races.

Doubtless the changes in socioeconomic inheritance and mobility for the black minority mirror a variety of causes; more research is required to uncover them with any certainty. But one likely possibility has already been mentioned--the expansion of the range of occupations, particularly white-collar ones, which have become open to blacks within the last decade and a half. Another possible source of change is the rapid improvement in the quantity and quality of education, which have led to substantial reductions of educational inequalities between the races, particularly among recent graduates. Whereas black men born around World War I completed three fewer years of schooling than whites, the racial gap closed to about one year among cohorts born during and after World War II. Still another possibility is compliance with equal rights legislation. But whatever the sources of these important shifts in opportunity for the black minority, their significance must be seen within the context of recent and unique changes in the relation of schooling to jobs among young whites.

Relation of Schooling to Jobs among Young Whites

Separate patterns of occupational mobility for black and white workers are least discernible among men in their late 20s. In part, this shift toward a common pattern stems from rather unique and not thoroughly interpretable recent changes in the connection of schooling to jobs among young white males. Compared to young white workers who were in their late 20s and early 30s in 1962, young whites of similar ages in 1973 acquire less well-paying jobs for their schooling. In particular the occupations and earnings of young whites with a college education have become less distinguishable from those gained by whites with only a high school diploma. A parallel shrinkage in the occupational and economic "premium" for a college education since the early 60s is

not apparent among young black workers. This, too, contributes toward the "catching-up" of the black minority.

Why the apparent erosion in the socioeconomic premium for college education only among young white workers? Some economists argue that the national budget for research and development declined in the early '70s, issuing cut-backs in aerospace, petrochemical, and other industries which typically employed college-trained workers. Coincident with this reduction, the substantially smaller birth cohorts of the post-"baby-boom" period--then in the schools--lowered the demand for college-trained teachers. These shifts on the "demand" side of the economic equation were linked to "supply"side effects. Namely, the pool of college-trained workers was very large in the early '70s, owing to the proportions of high school graduates entering post-secondary education in the late 1960s which were at an all-time high (about 55 percent of a graduating class) and to the absolute size of the age groups--the adults who were the "baby-boom."[4] For reasons of shifts in both supply and demand, unemployment of the college-educated rose, underemployment was more prevalent, and the occupational and economic returns to college education fell in relation to those to pre-college education. Inasmuch as these shifts were recent, their prevalence should have been most noticeable among the young workers who were just seeking first full-time jobs in the early '70s--persons in their mid- to late-20s.

It remains to be seen whether the apparent "turn-down" in the market for the college-trained has in fact occurred, and if so, what impact it will have on economic inequality and social mobility in the 1980s. Other events in the early '70s cloud the interpretation of the data from which the conclusions about a "turn-down" in the benefits of higher education have been drawn. Two of these events were the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and the dismantling of the draft, events which distinguish the experiences of young men

who were in their 20s in the mid-'60s from those who were the same age nearly a decade later. One consequence of this difference is that the compositions of the civilian labor forces of 20-year-olds were not really equivalent in the periods during which change in the returns to education was apparently occurring.

A related and perhaps more significant event concerns changes in the demography of the life cycle and the speed with which young men were completing their schooling and entering full-time jobs--that is, the duration of the complete transition from youth (student) to adult (worker). In the early 1960s, about 86 percent of young men then in their early- and mid-20s were in the labor force (at work or actively looking for a job) and 11 percent were enrolled in school. Of those who were working, some 13 percent also were enrolled in post-secondary education. In the early '70s, with the Vietnam involvement winding down and the draft a less impending eventuality in the plans of young men, fewer were in the labor force (81 percent), more were enrolled in school (15 percent), and a greater fraction of those at work also were enrolled (18 percent). By implication, the Vietnam war and the draft had the probable impact of speeding up the life-stage transition from school to work; World War II apprently had a similar effect in compressing the timing of schooling, work, marriage, and paternity. Near the end of Vietnam involvement, young men resumed a more protracted transition through schooling and into the labor force. Perhaps they were influenced to mix part-time education with employment by the rapidly rising costs of higher education. Perhaps the higher rates of unemployment in this period made school enrollment or re-enrollment an attractive alternative--as a way to wait for the job market to brighten and as a means to improve one's current marketability through upgraded skills and specialization.

The upshot of these speculations about shifts in life-stage transitions occasioned by Vietnam and related events is that larger fractions of men in their 20s during the early 1970s had not yet completed the full process of schooling, when seen against men of the same ages in the 1960s. More of them may have taken jobs of convenience which permitted them to work and complete their schooling at the same time. Thus, until such time as a larger proportion of these men complete the full transition into their post-educational careers, the calculations of economic and occupational returns to their schooling may be premature.

The Future Course of Social Mobility

This discussion illustrates the difficulty of projecting the future course of social mobility from information about present conditions. But in contemplating the future of socioeconomic opportunity, several issues are important to keep in mind. First, prospects for mobility hinge heavily upon changes in the prevalence of various types of occupations. Historically, declines in farming have arisen in unison with expansions in blue-collar trades and factory employment. More recently, the transition from a "goods-producing" to a "service-rendering" economy have stimulated job creation in the professional and managerial ranks of white-collar occupations. Sociologists who have analyzed the changes in intergenerational mobility processes such as represented in Table 2 have concluded that nearly all the change in the connection of social background and socioeconomic achievement can be traced to the expansion or contraction of the labor force in specific occupations--that is, to the relative prevalence of various types of jobs (e.g., professional, technical, administrative, crafts, service, unskilled labor) in the economy. Very little, if any, of the observed change in the degree of persistence of socioeconomic status between generations involves change in the conversion

of differential social background into differential achievements in the labor market. The future of social mobility, therefore, can be expected to follow the course set by the job-creating process.[5]

A second issue to keep in mind in considering the future of opportunity is the impact of what demographers call a "stationary population." A stationary population results from long-term zero-population growth--a rate of fertility which just replaces the population which is dying in a given period. Current child-bearing patterns among young families would, if practiced by subsequent cohorts, lead eventually to such a stationary population. The chances for social mobility through occupational advancement in a stationary population are less promising than those which have been possible in our nation's past, and the difference arises from the unique age structure of a stationary population. It would be an older population than we now have--there would be a substantially larger proportion of persons over the age of 45. Consequently, a relatively larger supply of mature persons of considerable experience would be available to fill positions of leadership and authority than at present. In that hypothetical situation, persons could not expect to move up into more responsible posts over the course of their careers with nearly as great a frequency as we today have become accustomed to.

Americans today enjoy at least as much opportunity for socioeconomic mobility as in earlier periods of this century. For some, especially blacks in the labor force, opportunities seem to have expanded, even though large inequalities in opportunity persist. There is nothing inevitable about social mobility in America, our national ideology notwithstanding. Given recent questioning of the economic value of education--especially higher education's potential for "insuring" social mobility--and in light of the uncertainties in the growth potential of the economy and its demographic components, it behooves us all to continue to monitor trends in socioeconomic inequality and opportunity.

Footnotes

[1]For example, among men between the ages of 21 and 65 who were not enrolled in school in March 1973, the percentage which had completed at least 4 years of college ranged between 10 percent of those born prior to World War I and 23 percent of those born during or after World War II.

[2]This is not to say that other factors, some modestly related to differences in socioeconomic background, provide for more or less progress through the grades of schooling. These include intellectual capacity, academic performance, career aspirations, and encouragements from important reference persons such as parents, teachers, and peers. The latter collection of factors, together with the specific aspects of socioeconomic background mentioned in the text, may account for fully 60 percent of the educational differences among persons.

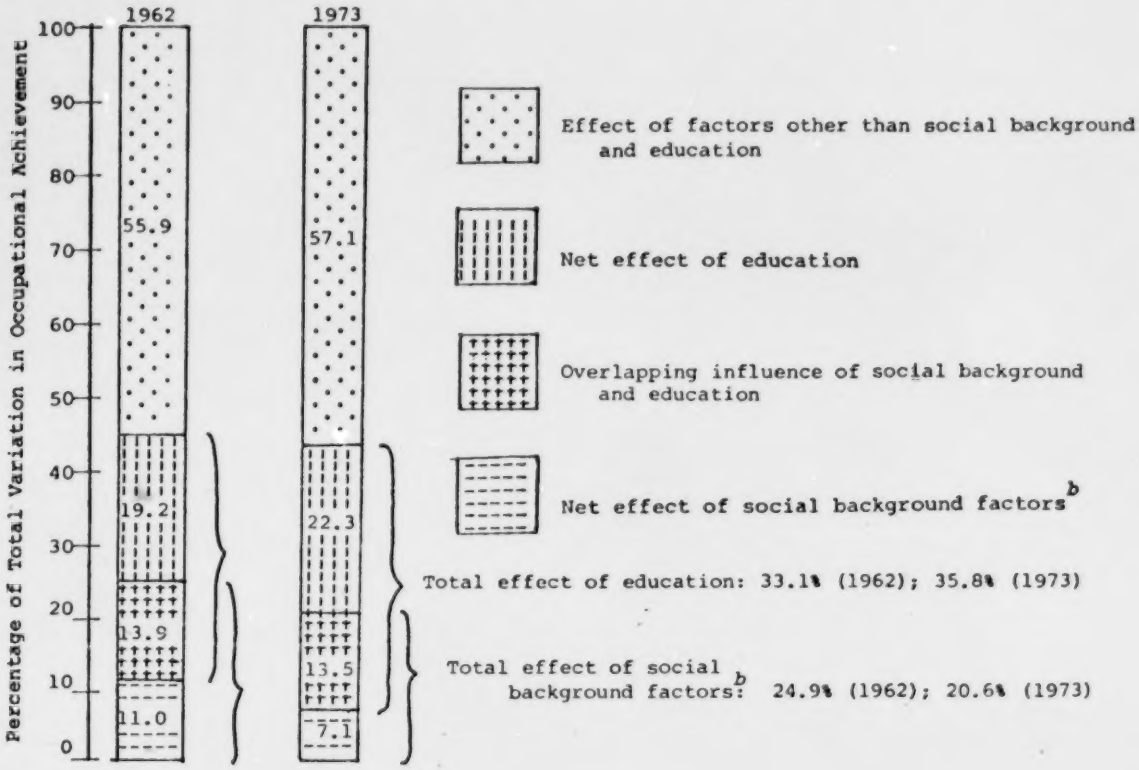
[3]While these "residual causes" probably include specifiable factors like age, ambition, region of residence, and on-the-job training, there is no reason to expect that all variation can be attributed to such identifiable sources. That is, "luck"--being in the right place at the right time--probably introduces a "chance" element into the process of achievement. The problem for the social scientist is to reduce the size of the residual component toward the limits of "luck's" imprint on the various occupational accomplishments of workers.

[4]Fully 5.6 million fewer children ages 6 through 14 were enrolled in school in 1970 as compared to 1960. During the same decade, the number of adults ages 20 to 24--the category containing persons with new college degrees--increased by 5 million among whites and by 6.5 million among blacks.

[5]Available international research on differences in occupational mobility among heavily industrialized, capitalistic economies is consistent with this speculation. Sociologists are just now analyzing the first sets of rather comparable mobility statistics for some half-dozen nations. But early findings suggest that country variation in patterns of mobility follow from differences in the mix of industries and occupations and not from differences in the ways social origins influence socioeconomic achievements. Should this conclusion

hold up under closer inspection, particularly as results from several socialist nations are included, it would imply that social mobility in America is less unique than our ideology would have it.

FIGURE 1: Sources of Variation in Occupational Achievement,[a] Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force, Ages 25 to 64, March 1962 and March 1973



[a]Occupations scored in units of socioeconomic status, reflecting income and education.

[b]Social background includes:
family head's occupational status[a]
family head's education
number of siblings
farm origin
broken family
race.

Source: March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys.

TABLE 1

Changes in the Intergenerational Educational Mobility of Black and White Men, by Birth Cohort, March 1973

Birth cohorts	Educational change in a generation[a]	
	Black	White and other
1907 to 1911	2.36	3.04
1912 to 1916	2.43	3.53
1917 to 1921	3.12	3.73
1922 to 1926	3.29	3.83
1927 to 1931	3.43	3.77
1932 to 1936	3.51	3.58
1937 to 1941	3.94	3.15
1942 to 1946[b]	3.63	2.79
1947 to 1951[b]	3.17	2.03

[a]Mean difference between son's and father's years of completed schooling.

[b]Inasmuch as these cohorts are still within the years of college enrollment, estimates are more provisional than among older cohorts for whom the transition from school to work is more complete.

Source: Occupational Changes in a Generation Survey, March 1973.

TABLE 2

Mobility from Father's (or other family head's) Occupation to Current Occupation: U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force Aged 20 to 64 in 1962 and 1973

Year and father's occupation	Son's current occupation: Upper white collar	Lower white collar	Upper manual	Lower manual	Farm	Total	Row percentage
1962							
Upper white collar	53.8%	17.6%	12.5%	14.8%	1.3%	100.0%	16.5%
Lower white collar	45.6	20.0	14.4	18.3	1.7	100.0	7.6
Upper manual	28.1	13.4	27.8	29.5	1.2	100.0	19.0
Lower manual	20.3	12.3	21.6	43.8	2.0	100.0	27.5
Farm	15.6	7.0	19.2	36.1	22.2	100.0	29.4
Total	27.8	12.4	20.0	32.1	7.7	100.0	100.0
1973							
Upper white collar	52.0	16.0	13.8	17.1	1.1	100.0	18.2
Lower white collar	42.3	19.7	15.3	21.9	0.8	100.0	9.0
Upper manual	29.4	13.0	27.4	29.0	1.1	100.0	20.5
Lower manual	22.5	12.0	23.7	40.8	1.0	100.0	29.7
Farm	17.5	7.8	22.7	37.2	14.8	100.0	22.6
Total	29.9	12.7	21.7	31.5	4.1	100.0	100.0

NOTE: *Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupation groups are upper white collar: professional and kindred workers and managers, officials and proprietors, except farm; lower white collar: sales, clerical and kindred workers; upper manual: craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers; lower manual: operatives and kindred workers, service workers, and laborers, except farm; farm: farmers and farm managers, farm laborers and foremen.*

TABLE 3

Mobility from Father's (or other family head's) Occupation to Current Occupation: Black U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force Aged 20 to 64 in 1962 and 1973.

Year and father's occupation	Son's current occupation: Upper white collar	Lower white collar	Upper manual	Lower manual	Farm	Total	Row Percentage
1962							
Upper white collar	10.4%	10.3%	19.7%	59.6%	0.0%	100.0%	4.5%
Lower white collar	14.4	13.5	0.0	72.1	0.0	100.0	1.9
Upper manual	8.5	9.7	10.4	67.9	3.6	100.0	9.0
Lower manual	7.6	8.0	10.8	71.4	2.3	100.0	37.2
Farm	3.2	3.3	7.0	66.7	19.8	100.0	47.4
Total	5.9	6.1	9.1	68.3	10.6	100.0	100.0
1973							
Upper white collar	33.2	21.8	10.1	34.8	0.0	100.0	5.0
Lower white collar	23.8	17.2	12.3	45.8	0.9	100.0	3.5
Upper manual	15.2	14.7	15.0	54.9	0.2	100.0	10.2
Lower manual	12.4	11.2	13.9	61.4	1.1	100.0	46.1
Farm	5.6	6.2	16.8	62.9	8.5	100.0	35.1
Total	11.8	10.6	14.8	59.4	3.6	100.0	100.0

NOTE: *Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupation groups are upper white collar: professional and kindred workers and managers, officials and proprietors, except farm; lower white collar: sales, clerical and kindred workers; upper manual: craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers; lower manual: operatives and kindred workers, service workers, and laborers, except farm; farm: farmers and farm managers, farm laborers and foremen.*